

Public Library Director's Guidebook

New directors are encouraged to connect with their [Library System](#) as soon as they can after starting their new job. This will be the fastest way to obtain vital information needed to run the library and to connect with peers throughout your System who will help answer questions that arise, be there to commiserate with and serve as models for your library so you don't have to recreate the wheel at every turn.

As a new library director you have a tremendous opportunity to positively impact your Library and your community within the first hours, days, weeks and months of your arrival.

Public libraries are one of the most important, critical service organizations in Nebraska. People rely on public libraries for education and entertainment, enjoyment and fulfillment. You have been entrusted with the leadership of this essential community institution and your community is counting on you to not only maintain the library's services but to improve them to meet their changing needs. In all things you do as director of the library think "community first" and you will rarely go wrong.

Quality library service begins with you. The tone you set with the staff, trustees, patrons, and community-at-large from your very first days on the job will help determine your success or failure in the library.

Everyone has their own style for tackling their first day at a new job, but at the very least you are meeting your staff, getting a tour of the library facility, and sorting out the essential documents you need to manage the library.

Take the time to learn how things work at the library before prioritizing change. Coming in like a whirlwind and running around —making things right (firing volunteers, heavy weeding of the collection, disposing of a donated collection that seems useless) can destabilize an organization if done without understanding the whole nature of the organization – even if these are things that ultimately need to happen. Calmly learning about the people, collection, and facility may take some time but is well worth it in the long run.

Here's a starter checklist to get you going:

As Soon As Possible

Library building

1. Ask for the passwords for the Director's computer and the Circulation computer.
2. Where are all the light switches?
3. Where is the thermostat?
4. Where are the heating and return vents?
5. Where are the fire extinguishers?

6. Where are the emergency exits?
7. Where are the breaker boxes/fuses?
8. Where is the water-heater?
9. Where is the main water shut-off? Who can shut it off?
10. Where are the library's flashlights kept?
11. Where are the emergency numbers kept?
12. Where do patrons go when the tornado-warning siren sounds?
13. Who has keys to the library?
14. Where are library keys stored?
15. Who cleans the library?
16. Who is the building maintenance person?
17. Who changes light bulbs?
18. Who replaces toilet paper?
19. Who removes trash, sweeps and vacuums the library?
20. Who unstops toilets?
21. Who mows the lawn?
22. Who removes snow from sidewalks and parking lots?
23. Who does the library's pest control?
24. Who is the library's insurance with?

25. Where are the library's insurance policies?
26. Is the library insured for replacement costs or mere current worth of materials?
27. When was the last insurance inventory taken?
28. What are the worst problems with the current library building?

During Your First Six Weeks

Library services

29. Determine your local service population.
30. Introduce yourself to patrons. Take note of the regulars.
31. Who can get a library card? What is required to get a library card?
32. What is done when items have not been returned by the due date?
33. What is done when items are returned late?
34. What is done when patrons claim items are lost?
35. What is done when patrons claim items have been returned, but the items can't be found in the library?
36. Does the library have a card or online catalog? If the library has an online catalog, what is the URL (i.e., web address) for the patron side of the catalog? What is the URL, login, and passwords for the staff administration of that catalog?
37. Who provides "cataloging records" for the library catalog?
38. Who handles interlibrary loan and reference questions at the library?

Library administration

39. Does the library have a job description for the librarian? If yes, where is it located?
40. Where can you find information about the responsibilities of librarians and trustees?
41. Where is a copy of the library's policies?
42. When was the last time the library board and librarian reviewed those policies?
43. Does the library have a mission statement? If yes, what is it?
44. Does the library have written goals or a strategic plan? If yes, where is a copy?
45. Review statistics.
 - Circulation
 - Program Attendance
 - Door Count
46. What reports are required monthly, quarterly, and annually and who will provide help with these forms?

• Report to the library board	Monthly	Library board
• Nebraska Library Commission Statistical Report	Nov-Feb.	NLC (Sam Shaw)
• Public Library Accreditation Application	July-Oct.	System Office
47. Where can you find information about Nebraska library law?
[\[http://nlc.nebraska.gov\]](http://nlc.nebraska.gov)
48. What is the URL of your library's web site?
49. Who is responsible for keeping the web site up-to-date?
50. Does the library have a disaster plan? If yes, where is a copy?
51. Where is a history of the library?

52. Is the library accredited? If so, check the accreditation level of your library.

- ☐ Bronze
☐ Silver
☐ Gold

53. Does your library have a Friends organization?

54. If yes, schedule a meeting with the Friends President.

Library collection

55. Below is a list of all library collections, location in library, and checkout period.

- **Location in library:** Use short phrases suggesting where to look, such as “Shelves along North wall”, “Cabinet in back of library”, or “Shelves on east side of children’s area .”
- **Checkout:** Use “3 wks” for “3 weeks”. Use “NC” for items that are “non-circulating”.

Name of collection	Location in library	Checkout
• New books	_____	_____
• Adult books		
- Fiction	_____	_____
- Non-fiction	_____	_____
- Biographies	_____	_____
- Large Print	_____	_____
• Children’s books		
- Fiction	_____	_____
- Non-fiction	_____	_____
- Biography	_____	_____
- Picture books	_____	_____
- Easy readers	_____	_____
• Young adult books	_____	_____
• Reference	_____	_____
• Audiobooks on cassette	_____	_____
• Audiobooks on CDs	_____	_____
• Videos	_____	_____
• DVDs	_____	_____

- Local history / genealogy _____
- Magazines _____
- Newspapers _____
- Microfilm _____
- Cake pans _____
- Toys _____
- Puzzles _____
- Other collections _____

56. How are items selected for the library's collections?

57. How are items purchased for the collection?

58. Where are back issues of magazines kept and for how many years back?

59. What does your library have on microfilm?

60. If a patron asks for items to be removed from the collection, what is the procedure for reconsidering items in the collection?

61. When was the last inventory of the collection?

62. When was the last time the collection was weeded?

63. Where is the shelf list?

Shelf lists are the list of all items in each of the library's collections. Items in these lists are arranged as they are on the shelf, i.e., in call number order.

Call numbers are the numbers on the spine labels of books, videos, etc. Call numbers are used in library catalogs to reveal the location of books, videos, etc. in the library.

During Your First Three Months

Library programs

64. What are your annual events and when do they occur?

Annual events	Date(s) of event	Person usually responsible
• Summer Library Program	_____	_____
• Story time	_____	_____
• Christmas celebration	_____	_____
• Halloween celebration	_____	_____
• Book sale	_____	_____
• Fundraiser	_____	_____
• Other events	_____	_____

Library board

65. Where is a copy of the library's policies located?

66. Does the board have by-laws?

67. When does the library board regularly meet (i.e., week of the month, day of the month, hour)?

68. Before your first Board Meeting, schedule time to talk to your Board President.

69. Read through past minutes of Board Meetings to get a feel for what is going on.

70. What information does the board want in the librarian's monthly report?

71. What are the names of all board members and when do their terms expire?

Board member name		Term expires
_____	President	_____
_____	Vice-President	_____

_____	Secretary	_____
_____	Treasurer	_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

72. How long do board members serve?
73. Are new board members for your library appointed or elected?
74. Is the library treasurer bonded?
75. Do the librarian and the Board have liability insurance?
76. Where are the written rules about the Open Meetings Act?
77. Where are past board minutes and treasurer's reports are kept?
78. Does the library board evaluate the librarian each year? If so, what criteria do they use?

Library finances

79. Where is a copy of your library's latest budget?
80. Who do you ask to find out the funds budgeted for the library?
81. What are the sources of the library's income and how much did each source provide last year?
82. Where are the written requirements for receiving state aid?
83. Where are the written requirements for receiving NLC grants?

84. If the library applies for E-rate each year, who fills out the required forms? What is the library's "entity number"? What are the SPIN numbers of your current telephone vendor and your current Internet provider?

85. Name five organizations that have given grants to the library during the past 5 years?

86. Name five people who have given substantial money, time, donations, etc. to the library during the past 5 years?

87. Which bank(s) has/have the library's:

Checking account(s)?	<hr/>
Savings account(s)?	<hr/>
Capital improvement fund?	<hr/>
Investments?	<hr/>

88. Who writes checks for the library?

89. Who signs these checks?

90. Who is responsible for payroll?

91. What employee benefits do library staff members receive?

92. Who reconciles the monthly bank statements?
93. Who is responsible for financial reports?
94. Who audits the library's financial accounts?
95. Where are the library's tax exemption certificates?
96. What is the library's FEIN (federal ID number) number?
97. Does the library have a postal machine for stamping outgoing mail? If yes, how is postage added to the machine?

Community Interaction

98. Attend meetings with other libraries in your county and System. (Your System should be able to connect you with these meeting dates.)
99. Start to find ways to become visible as a community leader locally, for example, join the Chamber of Commerce or a service organization, participate in community events, and attend local happenings. It's not enough to just attend - introduce yourself and tell people what you do!
100. Call and introduce yourself to:
 - Mayor
 - Village/City Clerk
 - School Principals / School Superintendent
 - Neighboring libraries
 - Other heads of nonprofits in the community